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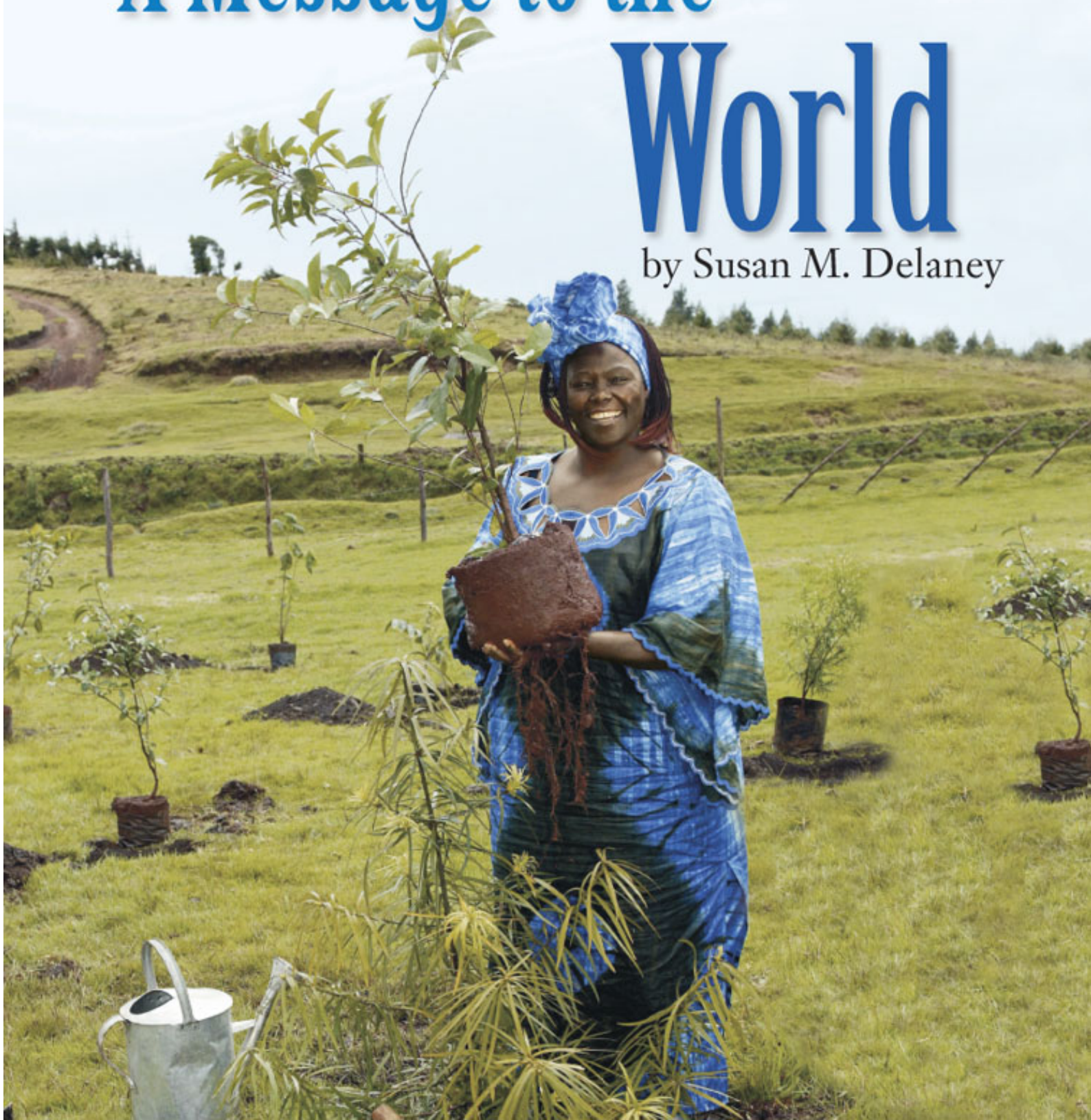
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Vocabulary Readers

A Message to the World

by Susan M. Delaney



Number of Words: 813

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A Message to the World



by Susan M. Delaney

Strategy Focus

As you read, **evaluate** how well the author explains the importance of Wangari Maathai's speech.



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

BOSTON

Key Vocabulary

audience those who attend a performance

conclusion ending

dramatic exciting, full of feeling

main ideas a speaker or writer's most important thoughts or feelings

opening beginning

political having to do with government

speech a talk given by one person to a group

tone mood or attitude in speech or writing

Word Teaser

What do a **speech**, a cave, and an art museum have in common?

A woman was bringing food to poor villagers in Kenya when she learned the news. She had been chosen to receive the Nobel Peace Prize! The woman's name was Wangari Maathai (wahn-GAHR-ee mah-TIE).

Maathai was overjoyed. She wanted to share the news with the people of her village. She decided to give a **speech** to tell everyone about her award. Two hundred people showed up to hear her speech.

When she told them she had won the Nobel Peace Prize, the villagers clapped politely. But most of them had never heard of the award before. Then Maathai told them that she had been given so much money she couldn't even count it. They laughed out loud!



Nobel Prizes are given each year to people who make a difference in the world. Some winners invent or discover something that helps everyone live a better life. Others receive the prize for writing important books.

Nobel Peace Prize winners, such as Wangari Maathai and Martin Luther King, Jr., are honored for showing people how to live more peacefully. For Maathai, the prize felt even more special because she was the first African woman to win.

Maathai flew to Norway to accept the prize. There, she gave another speech. But this time, she was not just speaking to her neighbors and friends. There were 1,000 people in the **audience**. And thousands more would soon hear about her speech all over the world.





In the **opening** lines of her speech, Maathai said, “As the first African woman to receive this prize, I accept on behalf of the people of Kenya and Africa, and indeed the world.” With open arms, she stood in front of the crowd. She began to tell a **dramatic** story, full of feeling, about her life and work in Kenya.

As a young girl, Maathai had watched the trees in her village slowly disappear. Businesses were clearing the land to make huge farms. Without the trees, people had no wood for fuel. Each year, women and children had to walk farther and farther to find wood so they could cook.





Maathai knew that Kenya could not afford to lose its trees. So one June day, she went into her backyard and planted nine trees. Her simple action inspired other women. They began to plant trees, too, in greater and greater numbers. This was the beginning of the Green Belt Movement, the group Maathai started to help Kenya.

As the trees grew, so did the Green Belt Movement. Over time, women planted 30 million trees in Kenya! People were amazed. Without much money or big equipment, these poor women had done something quite amazing. The trees they planted helped provide fuel, food, shelter, and money for many families. Soon other groups around the world began to plant trees, too.





Planting so many trees was a great achievement. Still, what did it have to do with peace? Maathai explained.

She said that when people learned about problems with the environment, they began to learn about other problems in Kenya, too. These included poverty and violence. People became aware that the troubles were due to the government. They were **political** problems.

The more they learned, the more people started to feel they had the power to make changes. People began working together instead of fighting over differences.







Some people who disagreed with the government were put in jail. The Green Belt Movement tried to help these prisoners. They planted “trees of peace” to demand their release.

Maathai noted that trees have always been a symbol of peace in Africa. For example, people often placed a tree branch between two sides in a fight. This was a sign for the people on either side to stop fighting with each other and make peace.

One of the **main ideas** of Maathai's speech was that ordinary people can make a difference in their communities. She asked everyone around the world to help care for the earth and each other.

She also spoke directly to young people. She asked them to follow their dreams and shape a better future. In a gentle but powerful **tone**, she said, "you are a gift to your communities and indeed the world. You are our hope and our future."





In her **conclusion**, Maathai spoke of a stream where she used to fetch water as a child. Sometimes she drank the cool, clean water.

“Today, over 50 years later, the stream has dried up,” Maathai said. “Women walk long distances for water, which is not always clean, and children will never know what they have lost.” Maathai asked people to help bring back the clean water. She said she hoped that the young people of today could enjoy “a world of beauty and wonder.”

Maathai’s speech was finished. Her powerful words reached many. Today, more and more people are helping her plant trees and spread the seeds of peace.

Responding

Putting Words to Work

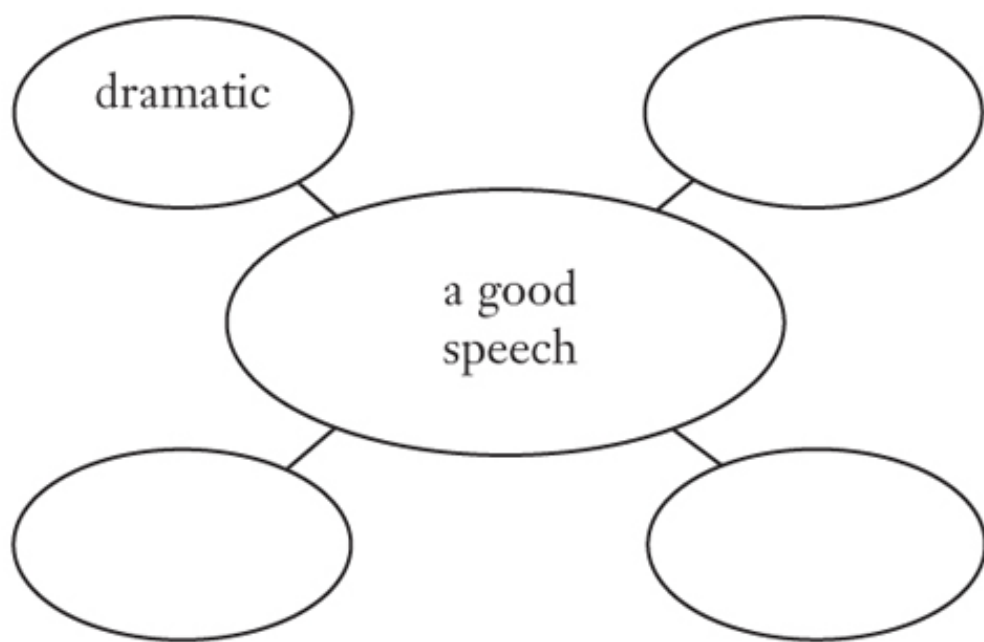
1. What is one of the **main ideas** of Wangari Maathai's **speech**?
2. Why is **tone** especially important in a speech?
3. Complete the following sentence:
The problem turned out to be **political**, because _____.
4. What information might you include in the **conclusion** of a speech?
5. **PARTNER ACTIVITY:** Think of a word you learned in the text. Explain its meaning to your partner and give an example.

Answer to Word Teaser

They all have **openings**.

Word Builder

What makes a good **speech**? Copy the web. Fill in words or phrases that describe elements of a good speech.



Write About It

Write a paragraph about a speech you might give. What would your topic be? Why is that topic important to you? Explain your main ideas about the topic. Use two or more words from your Word Builder web.

Key Vocabulary

audience

conclusion

dramatic

main ideas

opening

political

speech

tone

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